



# THE “MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY” AND THE MARROW CONTROVERSY

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TO readers unacquainted with the church history of Scotland the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the “Marrow Controversy” may convey little if any meaning. Yet they stand for much that is vital in the religious life in Scotland. The *Marrow*, though the work of an Englishman, has played a more important part in influencing Scottish theological thought for many decades than it did in the land of its birth. And while it may not have such a high place in our religious literature as Rutherford’s *Letters*, Guthrie’s *Christian’s Great Interest*, or Boston’s *Fourfold State*, yet because of the influence it exercised over such men as Fraser of Brea,<sup>1</sup> Boston,<sup>2</sup> the Erskines,<sup>3</sup> Whitefield,<sup>4</sup> Hervey<sup>5</sup> and Chalmers,<sup>6</sup> apart altogether from the fact that it was the cause of one of the greatest

<sup>1</sup> “I was much helped by Luther . . . and Calvin’s *Institutes*; something more by that book called the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.”—*Memoirs*.

<sup>2</sup> “I have been acquainted with that book eighteen or nineteen years, and many times have admired the gracious conduct of Providence which brought it to my hand, having occasionally lighted upon it in a house of the parish where I was first settled as minister. As to any distinct uptakings of the doctrine of the Gospel I have, such as they are I owe them to that book.”—*Works*, vol. vii.

<sup>3</sup> “We do indeed own that we esteem it as a book whose principal aim is to debase self; to exalt our great Master and His everlasting righteousness, and to ride marches between the Law and the Gospel. We own we have been edified by it.”—Quoted in Brown’s *Gospel Truth*.

<sup>4</sup> Ebenezer Erskine in a letter to Whitefield says: “I am glad the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* has been helpful to you, as it has been to many.”—*Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> “It is a most valuable book; the doctrines it contains are the life of my soul and the joy of my heart. Might my tongue or pen be made instrumental to recommend and illustrate, to support and propagate such precious truths, I should bless the day wherein I was born.”—Letter to William Hogg from James Hervey.

<sup>6</sup> Chalmers’ attention was first directed to the *Marrow* by Prof. Harry Rainy (father of the late Principal Rainy), Glasgow University, and his opinion is thus recorded in his *Memoirs*: “I am reading the *Marrow* and derive from it much light and satisfaction. It is a masterly performance. . . . Finished the reading of the *Marrow*. I feel a growing delight in the fulness and sufficiency of Christ.”

controversies in the Scottish Church, it is worthy of the student's serious attention.

It is now over two hundred years since the Rev. James Hog, minister of Carnoch, launched on the troubled sea of ecclesiastical strife the first Scottish edition. It came speaking of the things of peace, but its advent raised a storm that raged tempestuously for a time. The angry voices are long since stilled, and we, in these later days, can approach the subject with that calmness of mind that is so essential in giving an unbiassed judgment on the matters in dispute. A passing interest was awakened by the publication of a new edition in 1902.<sup>1</sup> The work was edited by the late Dr M'Crie, Ayr. This edition is somewhat disappointing for, though issued by an editor so well qualified, the introduction gives us but little fresh information. Not even a page is devoted to the *Marrow* literature, but all we are given is a tantalising footnote sending us to the pages of the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*. One notable and interesting feature of the edition is the biographical notes in the Appendix on the men whose works are quoted in the *Marrow*. The text has been founded on a number of editions carefully collated; obvious errors of author and printer have been corrected, and the spelling has been modernised.

## I

*The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was first published in 1645, while the Westminster Assembly was sitting. It went forth to the world with the title: *The Marrow of Modern Divinity; first part touching the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace with their use and end, both in the time of the Old Testament and in the time of the New, clearly describing the way of eternal life by Jesus Christ*. The book was published with the imprimatur of Joseph Caryl, known to students of Puritan theology by his voluminous commentary on the book of Job, a work the reading of which, as has been remarked, might well have exhausted the patience of the patriarch himself. Caryl had been appointed by the Westminster Assembly to revise and approve theological works for the press, and in recommending this work to the reader he describes it as a "discourse so stored with many necessary and seasonable truths confirmed by Scripture and avowed by many approved writers." With this recommendation the little work was sent forth on its adventurous and stormy career.

The great purpose of the book was to describe clearly the way of eternal life, and with this end in view it sets out by showing the difference

<sup>1</sup> *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and an Appendix, Biographical and Bibliographical, by C. G. M'Crie, D.D., Glasgow: 1902.

between the Law and the Gospel, and in doing so steers a middle course between Anti-nomianism and Legalism. According to its teaching the Gospel, strictly speaking, has no precepts, and even those precepts which are commonly regarded as belonging to it are in reality the precepts of the Law.

The first part of the book may be described generally as an exposition of the Federal Theology—the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace being clearly explained. The exposition is carried on in the form of a dialogue between Evangelista, a minister of the Gospel; Nomista, a Legalist; Antinomista, an Anti-nomian; and Neo-phytus, a young Christian. The dialogue is conducted with pleasing vivacity, though, of course, Evangelista has always the best of it. He is strong in detecting the weak points of his opponents, and if Antinomista and Nomista continue still in their old ways, it is not for lack of faithful warnings. The book is largely made up of extracts from the writings of the Reformation and Puritan divines—Luther, Calvin, Beza, Bullinger, Peter Martyr, Thomas Goodwin, Lightfoot, Sibbes, Marshall, and others. Hence its name, for it purported to contain the marrow of the writings of those divines who, at the time of its publication, were modern. The book contains some rather unguarded expressions, which were readily admitted to be so by the Marrowmen themselves.<sup>1</sup> But it is to be borne in mind that some of these expressions are from the writings of Luther, who lacked the scientific exactness of Calvin's master mind and who was not accustomed to measure his words when he was hurling thunder-bolts at popish error and legalism.

The *Marrow* seems to have enjoyed no small popularity, for by 1648 seven editions had been called for, and in 1690 a ninth edition was in circulation, in which the more extravagant expressions had undergone a judicious pruning.

A second part was published in 1648 in which Nomologista takes the places of Nomista and Antinomista. Nomologista is a prattler of the Law, and between himself and Evangelista the discussion drags somewhat heavily along, the point and vivacity of the first part being absent. Its theme is a spiritual exposition of the ten commandments, in which a middle course is steered between Anti-nomianism and Legalism. Like the first part, it has a recommendatory preface from the pen of Caryl.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I never recommend it in private to any person," says Ebenezer Erskine, "without telling them that there are unguarded expressions in it."—*Gospel Truth*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> "The marrow of the second bone," he says, "is like the first—sweet and good. The commandments of God are marrow to the saints, as well as the promises; and they shall never taste the marrow of the promise who distaste the commandments.



The *Marrow* is said to have been the production of Edward Fisher, Mickleton, Gloucestershire. He entered Brazenose College, Oxford, in 1627, where he took his B.A. degree in 1630. Soon afterwards he was called home by his relatives, who seem to have been in straitened circumstances. Wood mentions him in his *Athenæ Oxoniensis* (vol. ii., p. 198). He is credited with being an accomplished scholar in Greek and Hebrew, and a diligent student in ecclesiastical history. As to his early religious life, Fisher tells us in his preface to the *Marrow* that for twelve years he knew no other way to eternal life than to be sorry for his sins, to ask forgiveness, to strive to fulfil the law, and to keep the commandments. He wrote a number of treatises, rare copies of which may be found in the British Museum and Bodleian Library. Among these the following are attributed to him: *An Appeal to the Conscience, as thou wilt answer it at the great and dreadful Day of Jesus Christ*, 1644; *A Christian Caveat to old and new Sabbatarians*, 1650; *An Answer to Sixteen Queries, touching the Rise and Observation of Christmas*. His after career in life seems to have been somewhat checkered. Becoming involved in pecuniary difficulties, he is said to have retired to Wales and to have become a schoolmaster at Caermarthen. Here he was discovered by his creditors, whereupon he fled to Ireland, where he died, but in what year is not known. There is no foundation for Principal Hadow's scoff that Fisher was an illiterate barber in London.

There are some who claim the honour for another Edward Fisher who lived at the same time and wrote theological treatises. Be the author who he may, and while difference of opinion between the advocates of the two may be recognised, all will agree with the truth of Spurgeon's *jeu d'esprit*: "Fisher might well say, the lines have fallen to me in troubled waters."

## II

If the career of the *Marrow* in England was without light or shade it was not so in Scotland. A mere accident, the interest of a soldier in the book, his carrying it home to Scotland, his minister, Thomas Boston, taking it up out of curiosity during one of his pastoral visits, carrying it home with him, and finding in it a solution to some difficulties that had hitherto stood in his way of proclaiming a full and free offer of the Gospel—these are all incidents leading up to one of the greatest controversies in Scottish ecclesiastical history.

This little treatise breaketh the bone, the hard part of the commandments, by a plain exposition that so all, even babes in Christ, yea and such as are yet out of Christ, may suck and feed upon the marrow by profitable meditations."

Boston's own account of the finding of the book, an event so seemingly insignificant, but destined to give tone to the evangelical theology of Scotland, is of the deepest interest. About the year 1698, he tells us, he made the acquaintance of the Rev. George Mair, Culross, who was colleague to Fraser of Brea. In his preaching, Mair often spoke of being divorced from, and dead to, the law, expressions which conveyed little or no meaning to Boston. After his settlement at Simprin, his thoughts were turned to these matters and some light seemed to dawn on his mind. Still there were a few difficulties that remained unsolved. It was while he was in this state that he made an important discovery which was destined to be their long-sought-for solution, and to exercise a mighty influence on his preaching.

This discovery took place during his pastoral visitation at Simprin. On leaving the house of one of his parishioners his eye lighted on two small books of divinity. His student instincts were aroused, and, on taking them up, he found them to be Saltmarsh's *Christ's Blood Flowing Freely to Sinners*, and the first part of Fisher's *Marrow of Modern Divinity*. These had been brought home from England by the master of the house, who had been a soldier in the Civil War. Boston carefully read the books, but was dissatisfied with Saltmarsh's, while, on the other hand, he was so delighted with Fisher's that he purchased it from its owner, and ever afterwards reckoned it as one of his treasures. This must have been sometime about 1700. At any rate, he tells us, by the end of this year he had not only mastered its contents, but had begun to preach its doctrines. Nothing more was heard of the *Marrow* for the next eighteen years, but during all this time the simple country folks of Simprin were fed on its doctrines by their zealous and devoted pastor.<sup>1</sup> Its next appearance on the scene was to be the beginning of what is known as the "Marrow Controversy."

The Presbytery of Auchterarder, which has so frequently figured in Scottish Church history, desired to put an effective check on legal preaching, and had drawn up a proposition which it required all students of divinity, applying for licence, to sign. The proposition was couched in the following words: "I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ." This is what was known afterwards as "The Auchterarder Creed." The wording

<sup>1</sup> Hill Burton speaks of the *Marrow* as having "created that change of heart [in Boston] which it was the doctrine of his theological school to hold essential" (*Hist. Scot.*, VIII, 400). The "change of heart" had come long before this under the preaching of the Rev. Henry Erskine, the father of Ebenezer and Ralph. All the *Marrow* did for Boston was to clear away certain difficulties which stood in the way of his giving a free and full offer of the Gospel. Bunyan was not the first nor the last religious writer who had good reason to say: "The Philistines do not understand me."

no doubt easily lends itself to misconstruction,<sup>1</sup> but the evident purpose of the Presbytery was to save the Church from the legal strain of preaching adopted by the Moderates. The validity of the Auchterarder Creed was soon to be put to the test. In 1717 a student, William Craig by name, presented himself for licence, but refused to sign the Presbytery's proposition and in consequence was refused licence. The matter came up before the General Assembly the following year, when the fathers and brethren condemned the proposition as "unsound and detestable," and appointed a Committee on Purity of Worship, whose ostensible purpose was to keep pure the faith once delivered to the saints, but whose real aim was to hold watch over the Evangelical Party.

The case was one in which Boston was deeply interested, for he was a strong supporter of the Auchterarder Creed. While the debate was proceeding he entered into conversation with the Rev. John Drummond, Crieff, explaining to him what he understood by the free offer of the Gospel. In the course of the conversation he made reference to the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* in such a way as to arouse Drummond's interest. Drummond made a diligent search for a copy of the book in the bookshops of Edinburgh, and was successful in his search. Ere he had finished reading it, it was passed on to the Rev. James Webster, one of the ablest Evangelical ministers of his time, and from him to the Rev. James Hog, minister of Carnock, in Fife. Hog was so pleased with it that he made up his mind to have it reprinted. In 1718, accordingly, the first Scottish edition of the *Marrow*, with a preface by Hog, was issued from the press. The work caused a great stir in Fifeshire, and a war of pamphlets began.<sup>2</sup> Hog replied to some of these in the following year in his *Vindication of the Doctrine of Grace*.<sup>3</sup>

But it was the attack of Principal Hadow of St Andrew's that brought matters to a head. In April 1719, in a sermon preached before the Synod of Fife, and afterwards published with the title *The Record of*

<sup>1</sup> "Never will you forsake sin evangelically," says Ebenezer Erskine, "till once Christ come to you and you to Him. When Christ comes into the temple He drives out all the buyers and sellers. Therefore let Him in and He will make the home clean." The first line of Charlotte Elliott's well-known hymn, "Just as I am without one plea," is the "Auchterarder Creed" in poetic form.

<sup>2</sup> A list of these will be found in the Appendix to Low's *A General Account of My Life* by . . . Boston, p. 361-365, to which we make the following additions: *Letter to a private Christian on Gospel holiness* (Gospel Truth, p. 46); *A full and true State of the Controversy, concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity as debated between the General Assembly and several ministers in the year 1720 and 1721*, Glasgow: 1773; *Some Observations on a book called Marshall on Sanctification, the Marrow of Modern Divinity with Boston's Notes, and the Marrow Queries and an Act concerning the doctrine of Grace by James Muir*, Glasgow: 1801.

<sup>3</sup> Low adds in square brackets [understood to be by Ralph Erskine]. The letter, he says, is signed I. H., and adds in square brackets [Rev. J. Hog of Carnock].



*God and Duty of Faith therein Required*, he made a violent attack on the teaching of Marshall's *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* and of the *Marrow*. The Committee on Purity of Worship thought it right to justify their existence, and called before them Hog and his sympathisers, Hamilton, Airth ; Brisbane, Stirling ; and Warden, Gargunnoch. Hog was asked if he was the author of the preface of the last edition of the *Marrow*. He replied in the affirmative, adding that the reading of the book had been blessed to many, notably Fraser of Brea, and he had to acknowledge for himself that he had received more light about some important concerns of the Gospel by its perusal than by any other human writings that had come to his hands. The Committee, after an examination, gave in a report to the Assembly in which they charge the *Marrow* with teaching that assurance is of the essence of faith ; that the atonement is universal ; that holiness is not necessary to salvation ; and that fear of punishment and hope of reward are not allowed to be motives to a believer's obedience.

In 1720 the Assembly passed an Act strictly prohibiting ministers, either by preaching or printing, to recommend the book, or to say anything in its favour. Ministers were further enjoined to warn and exhort their people who had it, or into whose possession it might at any time come, not to read or use it. The terms of this Act were rigidly carried out by the Anti-Marrow men, among whom may be mentioned Principal Hadow and Professor Hamilton.<sup>1</sup>

The sweeping prohibitions of this Act gave a severe blow to the friends of evangelical truth in the Church of Scotland, for in their estimation the General Assembly had condemned a "bundle of sweet and pleasant gospel truths." Boston and his two friends, Wilson and Davidson, brought a motion for the repeal of the Act before their own Presbytery. The motion was sent up by the Presbytery to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, but when the vote was taken the Marrowmen were hopelessly outvoted. Foiled in this, their first attempt, they agreed to write Hog telling him of their ill success, and expressing the determination not to let the matter rest. Accordingly Boston drew up a rough draft of a document which they purposed laying before the Assembly. This draft was sent to the brethren in Fife, and a meeting was appointed to be held in the house of William Wardrop, an apothecary in Edinburgh. At this meeting there were present James Kid, Queensferry ; Ebenezer Erskine, Portmoak ; Ralph Erskine and James Wardlaw, Dunfermline ; William Wilson, Perth ; James Bathgate, Orwell ; Gabriel Wilson, Maxton ; Henry Davidson, Galashiels ; Thomas Boston, Ettrick. One recognises among these the names of men known in the Presbyterian churches the

<sup>1</sup> It is only just to Hamilton's memory to mention that in after years he expressed satisfaction with the *Marrow* doctrine of Christ as a deed of gift and grant to mankind sinners.—Boston's *Memoirs*, p. 420.



wide world over. As became those entering on a momentous struggle, they devoted their first meeting to prayer. Later, other meetings were held at which the Act of Assembly was carefully analysed and discussed. After matured deliberations it was decided that a representation should be sent up to the Assembly, pointing out the serious injustice the Act had done to the cause of evangelical truth. The drawing up of this representation was committed to Ebenezer Erskine, with whom was lodged Boston's draft already referred to. At a meeting held in March, Erskine presented his document, which, on undergoing a revision, was signed by all present. Ebenezer Erskine, Wilson and Hog<sup>1</sup> were absent from this meeting, and Hamilton, Brisbane, and Muir, though invited, did not come—"which was to our great discouragement," says Boston. The next meeting was appointed to be held on the first night of the Assembly.

On this occasion Hog and a goodly number of the brethren who had come up to attend the Assembly were present. It had been the intention to devote the time to prayer, but it soon became evident that there were some present who were more inclined to dispute than to pray. The two chief culprits were John Warden and Alexander Moncrieff, the latter being afterwards one of the "Four Brethren" of the Secession. These good men were dissatisfied with the Representation and suggested a number of alterations, to which the others would not agree. The whole night was spent in wrangling and wearisome disputings. At length, those who were satisfied with the Representation signed the document and decided to send it up to the Assembly. There were twelve signatories, and from this time they were known as the Representers and facetiously named by their opponents the "Twelve Apostles." The list includes the following names: James Hog, Carnock; Thomas Boston, Ettrick; John Bonar,<sup>2</sup> Torphichen; John Williamson, Inveresk; James Kid, Queensferry; Gabriel Wilson, Maxton; Ebenezer Erskine, Portmoak; Ralph Erskine and James Wardlaw, Dunfermline; Henry Davidson, Galashiels; James Bathgate, Orwell; and William Hunter, Lilliesleaf. To James Kid, "a man of singular boldness," was committed the task of presenting the Representation to the Committee on Bills and Overtures.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Hog's absence was thought expedient by some of ourselves because of his particular interest; he having writ the Preface to the *Marrow*.—Boston's *Memoirs*, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to notice in this list the name of an ancestor of John, Horatius, and Andrew Bonar—his first and last appearance among the Representers. This was also John Williamson's first appearance, but he was very useful afterwards, "being a man of clear head, ready wit and very forward" (Boston). Brown of Whitburn in his *Gospel Truth* gives short but interesting biographies of the Representers.

In this Representation the Marrowmen express their grief at the severe blow the Assembly has given to evangelical truth in condemning as unsound (1) that the Father hath made in the Gospel a free and unlimited offer of Christ and of salvation to all men, by virtue of which every individual who hears the Gospel has warrant to take hold of the said offer and apply it to his own soul ; (2) that an assured persuasion of the truth of God's promise in the Gospel, with respect to one's self in particular, is included in the very nature of saving faith ; (3) that the believer's holiness is in no way the price or condition of salvation ; (4) that believers in yielding obedience to the law as a rule of life ought not to be influenced either by mercenary hopes of heaven or by slavish fears of hell ; (5) that the believer is not in any way under the law as a covenant of works ; (6) and that it is a just and Scriptural distinction which is made between the law as a covenant of works and the law as a rule of life in the hands of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

It was decided by the Committee on Bills and Overtures that unless a conference was desired the Representation should be transmitted to the Assembly *quam primum*. Day after day passed, however, and the *quam primum* became a misnomer. At length, owing to the indisposition of the High Commissioner, the Assembly was dissolved. The Commission of the General Assembly now took up the matter, and after various appearances before them the Representers were asked to answer twelve queries dealing with the controverted points. The answers to these queries were drawn up by Ebenezer Erskine and Gabriel Wilson.<sup>2</sup> They display remarkable acquaintance with theological literature, and whatever may be one's opinion of the Marrow theology one cannot help admiring the care exercised in, and the deep religious tone pervading, these Answers. They came from men who were no ordinary theologians and whose hearts beat true to the great truths of the Gospel. In giving their Answers the Representers were careful to point out the unconstitutional nature of the Commission's procedure, and put in a caveat against their action being used as a precedent.

The Answers were apparently never received by the Assembly. But in the following year (1722) the Representers were called before the Assembly to receive sentence. On 21st May, at three o'clock, they were to appear at the bar of the Assembly, but as that hour approached

<sup>1</sup> These are given as summarised by Mackerrow.—*Hist. Secession Church*, I, 18.

<sup>2</sup> "The answers were, as I remember, begun by Mr Ebenezer Erskine, but much extended and perfected by my friend Mr Wilson ; where his vast compass of reading with his great collection of books were of singular use and successfully employed."—Boston's *Memoirs*, p. 365. These Queries and Answers will be found in Brown's *Gospel Truth*.

a terrific thunderstorm<sup>1</sup> swept over the city and sentence was delayed until later in the evening. At five o'clock the Representers were called to the bar, where they were admonished and rebuked, in the hope, it was said, that the great lenity used towards them should make them more dutiful in the future. The Representers protested against this sentence, but as a protest against a decision of the General Assembly is unconstitutional<sup>2</sup> it was not accepted. The sentence would in all probability have been heavier but for the earnest solicitations of the Government, which dreaded a breach in the Church when the country was threatened with invasion.<sup>3</sup>

In this way the Church of Scotland let fall on her faithful sons the heavy sentence of her condemnation; and they, on their part, conscious of their own integrity and the justness of their cause, accepted the sentence as an honour. From that day onward the Marrowmen became marked men. Every effort was made to keep them from being transferred to more important charges, and license was refused to young men who had sympathies with the Marrow theology. The Synod of Fife was particularly active in this direction, and all its members were required to re-sign the Confession of Faith with a new clause—"in view of the recent decisions of the Assembly." Ralph Erskine held out for years, but at last in 1731 he consented to sign it, appending the word "allenary"<sup>4</sup> to his signature. But if the Marrowmen suffered persecution from their brethren in the ministry,<sup>5</sup> they were more than compensated by the sympathy of the most pious of the people who rallied to their preaching at sacramental times in ever increasing crowds. The common people heard them with gladness and hailed them as witnesses of the truth.

<sup>1</sup> "I well remember," says Boston, "with what serenity of mind and comfort of heart I heard the thunder of that day, the most terrible thunderclap being just about three o'clock. It made impression on many as Heaven's testimony against the deed they were about to do; though" (as he wisely remarks) "in this, it is not for me to determine."—*Memoirs*, p. 365; *vide* also Wodrow's *Correspondence*, II, 652.

<sup>2</sup> "A dissent can be given in only by those who were present when the judgment dissented from was pronounced, and no protest can be taken against a decision of the Assembly."—Cook's *Styles of Writs, etc., in the Church of Scotland*, p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> "Had not this influence been exerted," says the elder M'Crie, "there is reason to believe that the sentence would have been more severe, and in that case the Secession would have taken place ten years earlier than it actually happened."—*Christian Instructor*, XXX, 286.

<sup>4</sup> "In Scots law *allenary* is a restrictive term equivalent to 'only' or 'merely.' Ralph meant that his signature applied only to the Confession, but he did not say so at the time."—MacEwen: *The Erskines*.

<sup>5</sup> "We became strangers to our brethren and as aliens, and saw that our mothers had borne us men of contention."—Boston's *Memoirs*.



## III

It would be tedious and perhaps unprofitable to enter into a full discussion of all the points raised by the Marrow Controversy, but there are a few which merit earnest consideration as having an important place in the historical theology of Scotland, and which also influenced some of the great evangelical preachers of England, such as Whitefield and Hervey.

I. THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.—The Marrow Controversy on this subject may be said to be a repetition of the controversy begun in apostolic times, when the Pauline doctrines of grace were set forth against the legalism of the Judaisers. They were brought to life again by Luther in his attack upon the legalism of the Church of Rome, and embodied particularly in his great masterpiece on the Epistle to the Galatians. The Marrowmen were charged by their opponents with being Antinomians. This is a term that has been somewhat loosely used and has been applied to Paul and Luther. The Marrowmen certainly held the Pauline and Lutheran doctrine on the Law and the Gospel. In the bad sense of the term, Antinomianism is the doctrine held by those who magnify grace in order to get their consciences at ease respecting the claims of holiness, and vindicate a liberty to themselves to sin that grace may abound. Luther set his face as sternly against this doctrine when promulgated by Agricola as he did against the legalism of Rome. The Marrowmen held no such doctrine. Their whole contention was against the legalism that was all too surely finding a place in Scottish preaching, and, by their strong opposition to it and in their declaration of the doctrines of grace, they gathered around them the living piety of Scotland. Dr Buchanan has the following paragraph: "The Marrow Controversy in Scotland was a protest against alleged Antinomianism, on the one side, and a reaction against real Neonomianism on the other."<sup>1</sup> This is scarcely a correct statement of the case, for while the Marrowmen were charged with Antinomianism, their protest was not so much against Neonomianism as against Legalism. Neonomianism was the view held by certain sectaries in the Westminster Assembly period, and more fully set forth in the Neonomian Controversy at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Neonomianism is the

<sup>1</sup> *Doct. of Justification*, p. 182. Edin.: 1867.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the outstanding publications in this controversy is given in Buchanan's *Doct. of Justification*, p. 464. An excellent review of the whole Controversy will be found in Witsius's *Animadversiones Irenicæ Controversiis quæ, sub infaustis Nominibus Neonomorum et Antinomorum*. An English translation was published in 1807 with valuable notes by the Rev. Thomas Bell, author of that excellent work on the Covenants—*A Scriptural View of the Covenants of Works and Grace*.

doctrine which asserts that a *new* Law was established by Christ in place of the old Law, which was buried with Him in His grave. While the first part of the *Marrow* guards against Antinomianism, the second part protests against Neonomianism, and Evangelista tries to hold the balance evenly and at the same time to set forth the Pauline doctrine of the believer's relation to Law and Gospel.

That the Marrowmen were not Antinomians is evident from the answer given by the Representatives to Query V: "If it be peculiar to believers to be free of the commanding power of the law, as a covenant of works?" To which they reply: "Though our saying, We cannot comprehend how the covenant of works, as such, continues to have a commanding power over believers, that covenant form of it being done away in Christ with respect to them, gives no sufficient foundation to this query, since we affirm nothing concerning any but believers, whose freedom from the commanding power of that covenant, the query seems, as much as we do, to allow of; we answer affirmatively; for, since it is only to believers the Spirit of God in Scripture says 'Ye are not under the law but under grace' (Rom. vi. 14; Gal. iv. 5, 21) . . . we can allow no other, besides believers, to be invested with that immunity. All unbelievers within, as well as without the pale of the visible church, since they seek righteousness only by the works of the law, and are strangers to the covenant of grace, we always took to be debtors to the whole law in their own persons." In answer to Query II: "Is not the believer now bound, by the authority of the Creator, to personal obedience to the moral law, though not in order to justification?" they reply: "We are clear and full of the same mind with our Confession, 'That the moral law of the ten commandments doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of God the Creator, who gave it; and that Christ doth not in the Gospel any way dissolve, but strengthen this obligation' (Chap. XIX.)."

A careful perusal of the writings of the Marrowmen will make it abundantly evident that their whole contention was to magnify grace and to oppose the insidious legalistic views that were undermining the very foundations of the Gospel. They accepted the Confessional doctrine as to the continued binding obligation of the law, and while denying believers were under it as a covenant of works, they asserted they were under it still as a rule of life.

2. THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH.—This is a subject that must always be of interest to lovers of evangelical truth. It was one of the important doctrines discussed at the Reformation, and it came up again for discussion during the Sandemanian Controversy. The Romish theologians held that faith was simply an *assensus* to divine truth, and

therefore that it had its seat in the intellect. The Reformers, while admitting that saving faith was an *assensus*, went further by maintaining that it also included *fiducia*. During this controversy another interesting question arose as to what was implied by this *fiducia*. The Romanists asserted that, inasmuch as the Reformers were cut off from the infallible Church, they could have no certainty in the truths which they believed. This the Reformers denied, maintaining that by saving faith the believer had a certainty or assurance that he was saved. This certainty is the "infallible assurance" of the Westminster Confession, which it asserts "doth not so belong to the essence of faith but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he is a partaker of it" (Chap. XVIII, sec. 3).

Cunningham, in an article which appeared in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*,<sup>1</sup> in reply to Sir William Hamilton, who confidently asserted that this doctrine of personal assurance was a fundamental doctrine of the Reformation theology, discusses at considerable length and in his own masterly way the Reformation doctrine of Assurance. He denies Sir William's assertion, but is forced to admit, and in this he is followed by Buchanan,<sup>2</sup> that the great majority of the Reformers held that personal assurance was essential to the idea of saving faith. Cunningham criticises this view, pointing out that the Reformers went too far in reading into their theology their own individual experience. He classes the Marrowmen with the Reformers in holding this view.

But while it is true that the Narrowmen were one with the Reformers in holding that saving faith is not merely an *assensus* but includes *fiducia*, they differed from the Reformers when they came to define what was implied in *fiducia*. The Reformers, at least a number of them, held that this *fiducia*, or trust, included the assurance of the believer that he was a saved person, and that this assurance was of the essence of faith. The Westminster Divines, however, guarded against this error and asserted that this "assurance of salvation," or "infallible assurance of faith," did not belong to the essence of faith (*Confession*, Chap. XVIII, sec. 3). The Marrowmen, while in full sympathy with the Confessional doctrine, unfortunately for themselves and others, appropriated the phrase "assurance of faith," but gave it a new meaning. They made a distinction between the "assurance of sense," or the reflex act of faith (*actio fidei reflexa*), and the "assurance of faith," or the direct act of faith (*actio fidei directa*). By the former they meant the "assurance" of the Reformers and of the Confession of Faith; by the latter they meant the assurance which is in faith, or to put it in a tautological form: You cannot believe without believing; that is in the very act of saving

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in his *The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation*.

<sup>2</sup> *Doctrine of Justification* (Cunningham Lectures), p. 377.



faith or believing, assurance or "an appropriating persuasion" enters into it.

This distinction between the "assurance of faith" and the "assurance of sense," however unfortunate the terms may be, must be kept carefully in view in arriving at a correct estimation of the Marrow position. In their eagerness to have the Reformers on their side it is evident they were not sufficiently critical at all times to recognise that the Reformers were using "assurance" in a different sense from which they used it. Cunningham, in rejecting the Reformers' doctrine of assurance, says: "The generality of modern divines and some of the Reformers held that *fiducia* was just trust or confidence in Christ's person, as distinguished from mere belief of the truth concerning Him and as involving some special application or appropriation to ourselves of the discoveries and provisions of the Gospel, but not directly and immediately any opinion or conviction as to our actual personal condition; while the generality of the Reformers and some modern divines, especially those known in Scotland as Marrowmen, have regarded it as comprehending this last element, also, and have thus come to maintain that personal assurance is necessarily and directly included in the exercise of saving faith or belongs to its essence."<sup>1</sup>

This is not the Marrow position, as can be seen by appeal to its literature. Evangelista, in the *Marrow*, after pointing out that believers are no longer under the law as a covenant of works, turns to Neophytus and addresses him thus: "Wherefore as Paul and Silas said to the jailer, so say I unto you, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' that is be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours and that you shall have life and salvation by Him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind He did it for you" (Chap. II, sec. 3). The Representers in their answer to Query VIII define what they mean by this assurance: "There is a full persuasion," they say, "by reflection, spiritual argumentation or inward sensation, which we are far from holding to be of the essence of faith; but this last being mediate and collected by inference as we gather the cause from such signs and effects as give evidence of it; it is very different from that confidence or persuasion by divines called the assurance of faith. . . . Further as to the difference between these two kinds of assurances the assurance of faith has its object and foundation without the man, but that of sense has them within him." If this assurance of faith, then, is essential to faith how do the Marrowmen account for the doubts of believers? These doubts, they say, may be, and often are, in the true believer; but they are not of this faith, which in its very nature and exercise is as opposite to them as light to darkness or the

<sup>1</sup> *The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation*, p. 123.

flesh to the spirit, which, though they be in the same person, are contrary the one to the other (Gal. v. 17). "And therefore faith wrestles against them, though with varied success, it being so far overcome sometimes and brought under by main force and superior strength of prevailing unbelief that the true faith cannot be more discerned than the fire when it is covered with ashes, or the sun when wrapped up in thick clouds." <sup>1</sup>

The most lucid summary of the Marrow doctrine of faith we have come across is that of Dr Colquhoun of Leith in his *Treatise on Saving Faith*. "It may be remarked," he says, "that there is a very great difference between the assurance of faith and that assurance of sense which is one of the fruits of faith. The assurance of sense is a believer's assurance that he is already united to Christ, and is in a state of grace. The assurance of faith is as inseparable from faith as light is from the sun; but it is quite otherwise with the assurance of sense. A man cannot have faith without having assurance *in* it; but he may have faith and not have assurance *of* it. For, though the mind cannot but be conscious of its own act, yet whether that act have the peculiar properties and nature of saving faith cannot satisfactorily be known but by reflexion. The assurance of sense or reflection, then, is not a believing in Christ; but it is a believing that we have believed in Him. It is not a direct act terminating on Him, but a reflex act by which we are assured of the saving nature of that direct act. But, although the direct act may be without the reflex, yet the latter cannot be without the former. A man must begin to believe before he can begin to know that he has believed. . . . The assurance of faith is commonly not so strong nor sweet as the assurance of sense which is supported by evidences. By the former, a man trusts upon the warrant of the free offer and promise that Christ will do the part of a Saviour to him; by the latter he believes upon the inward evidences of grace, that his faith is unfeigned and operative. By the one, he is assured of the truth of what God hath said to him; by the other, of the reality of what God hath wrought in him. By that he trusts he shall be pardoned and saved; but by this he is persuaded that he is pardoned and saved in part already. The object of the assurance of faith is Christ revealed and offered in the Word; the object of the assurance of sense is Christ formed and perceived in the heart. The former is the root and the latter is the fruit." Further quotations are unnecessary, as it must appear quite clear from the foregoing that the Marrowmen did not hold the view that the assurance referred to by the Westminster Confession is of the essence of faith.

It now only remains to add a few remarks on the progress of the controversy since the days of the Marrowmen. The controversy passed into England, where the Marrow view found an able defender in James

<sup>1</sup> The Representatives' Answers to Query VIII.

Hervey, the author of *Theron and Aspasio*. His view of faith was attacked by Robert Sandeman<sup>1</sup> with great acuteness in his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*. Sandeman held that faith was a "bare belief of the bare truth." He was ably answered by Wilson in his *Palæmon's Creed Reviewed*, by Cudworth in his *Defence of Theron and Aspasio*, and by Andrew Fuller in his *Strictures on Sandemanianism*. Sandeman's views were adopted by the Glasites, to which communion he belonged, and also by the Old Scots Independents, who trace their history back to the year 1768.<sup>2</sup> They are now almost extinct, having only one congregation in Glasgow. The Bereans or Barclayites, another small sect, the followers of John Barclay, who was deposed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1773, while holding that the assurance of the Westminster Divines was of the essence of faith, rejected the Marrow position with scorn.<sup>3</sup> Barclay, who appears to have cultivated the art of invective to a high degree, gave an illustration of his skill by making the Marrowmen his targets.<sup>4</sup>

3. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.—Intimately connected with the foregoing is the sinner's warrant to believe. In answer to the question, What is that warrant? the Marrowmen replied that it was the Father's "deed of gift and grant of His Son to sinners of mankind." It was this mode of expression that laid them open to the charge of teaching the doctrine of a universal atonement, but in reality the crucial point of the controversy was not so much the extent of the atonement as the effort on the part of the Marrowmen to solve the old problem of a universal call and a definite atonement. Never before, perhaps, in Scottish preaching was such stress laid on the free offer of the Gospel to every sinner of the human race. True, the predecessors of the Marrowmen in the evangelical line, such as Rutherford, Traill, and Binning, made it prominent in their preaching; but it was reserved for the Marrowmen to give this truth such an honoured place that it has been a potent power in keeping Hyper-Calvinism out of the Scottish pulpit. The question which the Marrowmen tried to solve is of as much interest

<sup>1</sup> Sandeman's views were adopted by Dr John Erskine, of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, Archibald Maclean (Baptist), and Dr Chalmers—Brown's *Theological Tracts*, II, 204. Brown himself, and Dr Stewart, Dingwall, in a little book, *Hints on Faith and Hope* (1845), taught the same view.

<sup>2</sup> Ross's *Hist. of Congregational Independency in Scotland*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Barclay's *Assurance of Faith Vindicated*, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> In America the Marrow view of faith as set forth by Hervey was attacked by Bellamy in his *Letters and Dialogues between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio*, while the Rev. Prof. Anderson, D.D., in his *Scripture Doctrine of Appropriation*, ably defended it. The latter work is well worthy of the student's perusal. Among the writings of more recent divines who advocate the same view is to be mentioned Buchanan's *The Doctrine of Justification*.



to us as it was to them. Whether they were successful in solving it has been seriously questioned, but our interest for the time being lies in their attempt to do so.

In the *Marrow* Neophytus asks the important question: "But, sir, hath such an one as I warrant to believe in Christ?" Evangelista answers: "I beseech you consider that God the Father as He is in His Son Jesus Christ moved with nothing but His free love to mankind lost; *hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all*, that whosoever of them shall believe in His Son shall not perish but have eternal life. And hence it was that Jesus Christ Himself said unto His disciples, 'Go and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven,' that is, 'Go and tell every man without exception that here is good news for him: Christ is *dead for him*; and if he will take and accept His righteousness, he shall have Him.'" <sup>1</sup> The two expressions in italics were regarded by the Hadow party as teaching the doctrine of a universal atonement. This the Marrowmen denied. "This deed of gift and grant," says Boston in his "Notes" on the *Marrow*, "or authentic Gospel offer is expressed in so many words (John iii. 16), 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Where the Gospel comes this grant is published and the ministerial offer made; and there is no exception of any of all mankind in the grant. If there was, no ministerial offer of Christ could be warrantably made to the party excepted, more than to the fallen angels; and without question the publishing and proclaiming of heaven's grant unto any by way of ministerial offer, presupposeth the grant in the first place to be made to them; otherwise it would be of no more value than the crier's offering to the King's pardon to one who is not comprehended in it. This is the good old way of discovering to sinners their warrant to believe in Christ; and it doth indeed bear the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ for all, and that Christ crucified is the ordinance of God for salvation unto all mankind in the use making of which only they can be saved: but not an universal atonement or redemption." <sup>2</sup> To the same effect the Representatives reply to Query X of the Commission: "By the deed of gift or grant," they say, "we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the word, affording warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant to all to receive; for although we believe the purchase and application of redemption to be peculiar to the elect, who were given to Christ by the Father in the counsel of peace, yet the warrant to receive Him is common to all."

The other expression quoted to which objection was found—"Go tell every man without exception that here is good news for him: *Christ is dead for him*," is taken from a work by Dr Preston, an eminent tutor

<sup>1</sup> Chap. II, sec. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Boston's *Works*, VII, 263.

and popular preacher of his day. Boston explains the expression as follows: "Therefore he [Preston] saith not: 'Tell every man that Christ died for him, but tell every man Christ is dead for him, *i.e.* for him to come to believe on, a Saviour is provided for him; there is a crucified Christ for him, the ordinance of heaven for salvation; for lost mankind in the use making of which he may be saved.' Thus what, according to Dr Preston and our author, is to be told to every man is no more than that ministers of the Gospel have in the Commission from the great Master, 'Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage' (Matt. xxii, 4). There is a crucified Saviour, with all saving benefits for them to come to, feed upon, and partake of freely." <sup>1</sup>

Boston is careful to point out in a note, too long to be quoted here, that Preston had no intention of teaching the doctrine of a universal atonement, that in fact the whole drift of his book clearly shows that he believed in a definite atonement. Whatever objection may be found with the Marrowmen's mode of expression—and here again it must be said that their terms were not of the happiest kind—it is evident from their writings that they were firm believers in the doctrine of a definite atonement,<sup>2</sup> and it could be as easily shown that, while steering clear of Arminianism, they managed no less successfully to steer clear of Amyraldianism. In fact, what has been described by Dr Smeaton<sup>3</sup> as perhaps the best refutation of Amyraldianism to be found in English is Adam Gib's *Display of the Secession Testimony*.<sup>4</sup> Gib was a devoted follower of the Marrowmen, and one of the most courageous and intelligent defenders of their theology.

It is to be candidly admitted, of course, that in after years by a process of development the Marrow theology on this point drifted into what was known in the Scottish Secession Churches as the Double Reference Theory of the Atonement and gave rise to the Atonement Controversy. In 1749 a work entitled *Justifying Faith* appeared. The work is usually attributed<sup>5</sup> to Fraser of Brea. Its references to the Atonement were distinctly Amyraldian. The book was recommended

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, VII, 264.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout we have used the term "definite atonement" as suggested by the Princeton theologians in preference to the more familiar but less accurate term "limited atonement." There was truth in the expression used by the older theologians that the atonement was *sufficient* for all, but while asserting its unlimited scope they guarded its definite purpose by adding "but *efficient* for the elect."

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton's *Our Lord's Doctrine of the Atonement*, 2nd edit., p. 472.

<sup>4</sup> II, 131-190 and 273-298.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Gib in his *Present Truth*, II, 131, was suspicious that Mr Mair had altered the text for his own purpose, but he may have been mistaken.

by Mair, one of the anti-burgher ministers. He had not much of a following in his own Church, but in the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery the new views gave rise to a bitter controversy that ended in the formation of a new Presbytery of two ministers and two elders who favoured these views.<sup>1</sup> They published a defence of their position and the pamphlet was recommended by Mair. The General Associate Synod passed an "Act concerning Arminian Errors" condemning these views. Mair objected to this Act, and after being repeatedly dealt with by the Synod he was deposed in 1757. It was in connection with this controversy that Adam Gib wrote his *Illustration* referred to above by Smeaton.

The questions which gave rise to the Atonement Controversy scarcely come within the scope of our subject, but anyone interested will find the matter fully discussed in Robertson's *History of the Atonement Controversy in the Secession Church*. But there is one case which came under the review of the United Secession Synod in 1845 to which some reference must be made, in view of the fact that the views advocated by Profs. Balmer and Brown have been confused with the Marrow doctrine. Brown,<sup>2</sup> one of the finest expository preachers Scotland ever possessed, and at that time a professor in the United Secession Church, stood forth as the defender of his colleague, Balmer. In his appearance before the Synod he declared that "in the sense of the great body of Calvinists that Christ died to remove obstacles in the way of human salvation by making perfect satisfaction for sin, I hold that He died for all men." Balmer, in a preface to a reprint of Polhill's *On the Extent of the Death of Christ*, says: "Twelve years ago the supreme court of the United Secession Church passed an Act condemning the doctrine of a universal atonement and forbidding the use of the phrase. But how great the change effected within the last two years! The doctrine of a general reference to the death of Christ has been officially recognised, such a reference as necessarily implies a universal atonement." The whole subject may be studied at greater length in Robertson's *Atonement Controversy*. The account there given is, however, misleading in so far as the attempt is made to father on the Marrowmen the views of Brown and Balmer. It is no doubt owing to Robertson's leading that Hodge in his *Outlines of Theology* and also to a certain

<sup>1</sup> For an account of this Presbytery and the Controversy in the Reformed Presbyterian Church see "A Breach in the Reformed Presbytery, 1753," by Rev. W. J. Couper, *Records of the Scot. Church Hist. Soc.*, I, 1-28.

<sup>2</sup> Father of Dr John Brown, known to the world of letters by his beautiful literary production *Horæ Subsecivæ*. Prof. Brown referred to above published a number of commentaries on Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and 1 and 2 Peter, in which his expository gifts manifest themselves.



extent in his *Atonement*<sup>1</sup> makes the views of the Marrowmen and the United Secession professors to coincide.

## IV

The Controversy called forth quite a voluminous literature. Some of it was of a merely ephemeral nature, but there were also works produced which, by the ability displayed, merit perusal even in these days. Principal Hadow was the first to enter the lists, after the publication of the Scottish edition of the *Marrow* by Hog, with his sermon, *The Record of God, and Duty of Faith therein Required*. This sermon was published in 1719 and has been described as a creditable performance, though somewhat marred by imputations of rigidity and uncharitableness towards Hog. This was followed by his *Antinomianism of the Marrow Detected*. Brown of Whitburn asserts in his *Gospel Truth* that Prof. Dunlop in his account of Guthrie of Fenwick, and in the preface to the well-known *Collection of Confessions of Faith*, published *Strictures on the Marrow Doctrine*, but as far as is known, he does not appear to have taken any part in the ecclesiastical proceedings against the Marrowmen. To the same side belong *The Snake in the Grass*; *The Observer*; *The Friendly Advice*; *An Essay in Gospel and Legal Preaching*.

In defence of the Marrow position there are Hog's *Conference betwixt Epaphroditus and Epaphras* and a *Letter to a Private Christian on Gospel Holiness*. Gabriel Wilson's *Letter to a Ruling Elder* is a pamphlet also worthy of notice. In 1721 Boston's two friends, Gabriel Wilson and Henry Davidson, suggested that he should write notes on the *Marrow*. He carried out their suggestion, and these notes were finished in the following spring, but owing to his respect for church authority they were not published until 1726. They went forth to the world under the *nom de plume* of Philalethes Irenæus, and had in view the refutation of Hadow's *Antinomianism of the Marrow Detected*. Boston's sermons—"Christ the Saviour of the World"; "Christ the Gift of God to Sinners"; "The Mystery of Christ in the Form of a Servant"—are also expositions of the Marrow theology. Ralph Erskine in his sermons—"Law Death, Gospel Life"; "The Pregnant Promise"; "The Giving Love of God and Receiving Property of Faith"; "Christ the People's Covenant"—are also all in the same strain. The same may be said of the following sermons of Ebenezer Erskine—"Christ in the Believer's Arms"; "The Law of Faith going out of Mount Sion"; "The Assurance of Faith Opened and Applied"; and "The Necessity

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 417 (Enlarged Edit.), 352 respectively.

and Profitableness of Good Works Asserted." Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, at one time so highly prized by the serious minded in Scotland, and her sons beyond the seas, is a book steeped in the Marrow doctrines. Ralph's poetry is not of the highest order, and Fuller's characterisation of the poetical efforts of some in his own time happily describes Ralph Erskine's. "They were men whose piety," he says, "were better than their poetry, and they had drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon." The following lines show how deeply Ralph Erskine "drank of Jordan":—

"The Gospel preacher then with holy skill,  
Must offer Christ to whomsoever will,  
To sinners of all sorts that can be named—  
The blind, the lame, the poor, the halt, the maimed—  
Not daring to restrict the extensive call,  
But opening wide the net to catch them all.  
No soul must be excluded that will come,  
No right of access be confined to some.  
Though none will come till conscious of the want,  
Yet right to come they have by sovereign grant;  
Such right to Christ, His promise and His grace,  
That all are damned who hear and don't embrace.  
So freely is the unbounded call dispensed,  
We therein find even sinners unconvinced."

During the Controversy there appeared a number of works by an anonymous writer, which showed remarkable ability. The first of these was *Dialogue First* on the Marrow Controversy, published in 1721, followed in 1722 by *Dialogue Second*. The speakers in these dialogues are Gamaliel, a defender of the Assembly Act; Paul, a defender of the Representation; Philologus, a private Christian, a violent advocate of the Assembly Act; Apelles, also a private Christian and zealous friend of the Representers; Rufus, a well-meaning Christian, attached to neither side; Gallio, a careless libertine who uses these debates to ridicule all true religion. The next tract from the pen of this writer was *The Politick Disputant: Choice Instructions for Quashing a Stubborn Adversary*. The instructions are thirty in number. As a specimen this is the first: "Study carefully whatever methods may be most proper to raise your own reputation and sink your adversary's—no matter whether by making him ridiculous or odious and contemptible; but your best course will be to carry on both designs at once." The part dealing with Principal Hadow's works is written in a serious strain. In 1723 the literature of the Controversy was further enriched by two other works from the same pen. The first volume, extending to 446 pages, is entitled, *A Sober Enquiry into the Grounds of the Present Differences in the Church of Scotland, wherein the Matters under Debate are Fairly Stated, the Differences Adjusted, and Mr Hadow's Detections Considered and*

*Weighed*. Deuteronomy xix, 16-19, is quoted on the title-page. This is decidedly one of the ablest defences of the Marrow theology. The book is now somewhat difficult to obtain. The other work published in the same year is entitled, *A Review of an Essay upon Gospel and Legal Preaching*. These works, though published anonymously, are now known to be from the pen of the Rev. Robert Riccaltoun, Hobkirk.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the most remarkable men of his time. The books were written while he was a probationer.

Another noteworthy document in connection with this Controversy is the Act passed by the Associate Synod of 1742 entitled, "Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace"—an abridgement will be found in Adam Gib's *Display of the Secession Testimony* (Vol. I). Two excellent treatises dealing with the subject of Saving Faith from the Marrow standpoint will be found in Bell's<sup>2</sup> *Treatise on the Nature and Effects of Saving Faith*, and Colquhoun's<sup>3</sup> *View of Saving Faith*. The next work Principal Cairns considered the best account of the Controversy to be found in a small compass—Brown of Whitburn's *Gospel Truth*. It is a compilation of the various documents in connection with the Controversy; together with interesting and valuable extracts from the works of the Marrowmen, with short biographies of the most distinguished of them. The work is valuable as setting before us in compact space the contendings of the Marrowmen.

M'Crie, the biographer of Knox, took up the subject and discussed it in a number of articles which appeared in the *Christian Instructor*,

<sup>1</sup> Robert Riccaltoun was born in 1691, and educated at the Grammar School of Jedburgh and the University of Edinburgh. His academic career was simply a matter of choice, as he had no plan for his future. But his religious character, combined with talents of no ordinary degree, so commended themselves to the Presbytery of Kelso that they urged him to accept license even though he had not gone through the divinity classes. He was licensed in 1717, and in 1725 he was presented to the parish of Hobkirk by the Presbytery of Jedburgh in the exercise of their right of the *jus devolutum*. In 1740 he wrote a poem entitled, "A Winter's Day," which appeared in the May number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that year. It was this poem which suggested to James Thomson (whom he had tutored) his *Winter*, the first written of the *Seasons*—Bayne's *Life of Thomson*, p. 29. His works were published in the years 1771-72 by his son, in three volumes. Unfortunately they do not include the above-mentioned works, as they were only intended to include what had not hitherto been printed.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Bell was a minister of the Relief Church, and a preacher of some note in his day. The above-mentioned treatise is printed with the work on the Covenants (1814).

<sup>3</sup> Dr Colquhoun, Leith, was a noted Gospel preacher, and his works, such as *Treatise on Spiritual Comfort*; *Treatise on the Covenant of Grace*; *Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*; *Treatise on the Covenant of Works*; *View of Evangelical Repentance*, were highly appreciated at one time. The work mentioned above, while setting forth the same truths as Bell's, is happier in expression and clearer in statement.



1831-32. Unfortunately they were not finished, and one cannot help expressing regret that the whole subject did not come under the calm, judicial review of one of Scotland's greatest ecclesiastical historians. In the second volume of the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, his son, the younger M'Crie, gave a historical account of the Controversy; and in the same periodical for the year 1884 Dr C. G. M'Crie, Ayr, has three articles dealing with the Controversy and its literature.

Along with these must be mentioned a noteworthy book whose contents are hidden behind a misleading title—Agnew's *Theology of Consolation*. The author, following John Brown of Haddington, defines "consolation" to be "that refreshful pleasure of the soul which ariseth from the consideration of what God in Christ is to us, and of what He has done for and infallibly promised to us." The first part of the book is chiefly made up of extracts from the works of eminent divines, among whom the Marrowmen are largely represented, setting forth the theology of consolation. The second part of the book consists of a Dictionary of Writers, containing among others the names of almost all who took part in the Controversy. Short biographical notices, with references to works of interest written by the authors, make this part of the work invaluable.

As to books published within recent years reference may be made to Dr MacEwen's *Studies, Historical, Doctrinal, and Biographical*, which contains a paper on the Marrow Controversy, and the *Religious Controversies of Scotland*, by Rev. H. F. Henderson, Dundee, which also has a chapter on the Marrowmen. There is also M'Crie's edition of the *Marrow* already referred to. The fullest bibliography of books and pamphlets connected with the Controversy will be found in the Rev. G. D. Low's edition of Boston's autobiography, and already referred to in a footnote. The bibliography classifies the pamphlets under the headings, (a) in favour of the *Marrow*; (b) against the *Marrow*.